

Action Required: IR Commission members are invited to note the relevant outcomes of NCSR 12.

1. Integrating VDES into SOLAS – draft amendments finalized

The Sub-Committee agreed to draft amendments to chapter V and the appendix of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) introducing the VHF data exchange system (VDES) as an alternative shipborne navigational equipment and system to comply with the existing requirements of the automatic identification system (AIS). These were submitted for approval by the Maritime Safety Committee at MSC 110, with a view to adoption by MSC 111 in 2026 and entry into force on 1 January 2028.

VDES is a radiocommunication system in the VHF maritime mobile band, capable of exchanging digital data between ships, ships and shore authorities and services, with minimal involvement of ship's personnel and higher data transmission rates than AIS by employing wider bandwidths and advanced modulation methods. VDES offers a high level of availability and security, using both terrestrial and satellite components (including AIS). This system will support richer data exchange between vessels and shore, improving situational awareness for all mariners, including those in the leisure sector.

2. Dissemination of maritime safety information (MSI) – draft amendments to SOLAS finalized

The Sub-Committee agreed on draft amendments to SOLAS regulations IV/5, V/4 and V/5 to clearly state the requirement for dissemination of maritime safety information and SAR-related (search and rescue) information. Coastal States disseminate MSI and SAR information through all recognized mobile satellite services—not just Inmarsat. This new requirement will broaden the reach of safety broadcasts, which is particularly beneficial for smaller recreational vessels relying on diverse communication systems. It will also help smaller boats to get safety alerts more easily, even far from shore. The draft amendments will be submitted to MSC 110 for approval, with a view to adoption by MSC 111 and entry into force on 1 January 2028.

Alongside the amendments to SOLAS regulations IV/5, V/4 and V/5, the Sub-Committee also agreed to the draft revision of resolution MSC.509(105)/Rev.1 on *Provision of Radio Services for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)*, adding additional criteria for the provision of an international enhanced group call service in the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).

3. Ship routing measures and ship reporting systems

The Sub-Committee agreed on the following draft measures, with a view to adoption by MSC 111:

- a new area to be avoided (ATBA) "off the coast of Réunion" in the Mascarene Basin, aiming at reducing the risk of maritime accidents, improving the safety of navigation and protecting the marine environment;
- a revision of the existing mandatory ship reporting system "In the Adriatic Sea" (ADRIREP), expanding the existing system to improve maritime safety in the region and facilitating ship reporting requirements by using electronic means; and
- amendments to existing mandatory ship reporting systems "In the Sound between Denmark and Sweden" (SOUNDREP) and "In the Storebælt (Great Belt) traffic area" (BELTREP), adding new reporting requirements to provide evidence of existence of insurance for maritime claims, as well as civil liability certificates.

5. Guidelines on carriage and use of electronic nautical publications (ENP) system finalized

The Sub-Committee finalized the draft MSC circular on Guidelines on carriage and use of electronic nautical publications (ENP) system, for approval by MSC 111. The new guidelines aim to promote the effective use of electronic nautical publications, covering aspects such as the general requirements for carriage and operation of ENP on board a vessel, adequate backup arrangements and power supply.

6. Performance standards for BeiDou Satellite Navigation System revised

The Sub-Committee agreed to the draft revised *Performance standards for shipborne BeiDou Satellite Navigation System (BDS) receiver equipment* (resolution MSC.379(93)), to be submitted with a view to adoption by MSC 111 in 2026.

BDS is a satellite navigation system, independently developed and operated by China, that was recognized by IMO as a component of the World-Wide Radionavigation System (WWRNS) to assist in the navigation of ships in ocean waters. The revised performance standards enable maritime users to utilize improved services and would apply to BDS receiver equipment installed on or after 31 July 2028.

7. Progress on digital navigation data system (NAVDAT)

The Sub-Committee progressed its work towards introducing NAVDAT - a digital broadcasting system operating on selected medium and high frequency (MF and HF) bands – into the IMO regulatory framework. NAVDAT can communicate texts, images, graphs and data to compatible receiving equipment on vessels, at speeds much higher than NAVTEX. This will allow for faster and more detailed safety broadcasts, including weather and navigational warnings. NAVDAT could significantly improve the real-time safety information available to recreational boaters - especially those operating offshore - faster and in more detail than before.

8. Guidance for updating information on the Global SAR Plan finalized

The Sub-Committee approved a COMSAR circular on *Guidance for entering and updating information on search and rescue services into the Global SAR Plan and on how to get access to the information for operational use*.

SOLAS Contracting Governments are required to provide the IMO with details of their search and rescue (SAR) services and the delimitations of their SAR regions. The Global SAR Plan module in GISIS (Global Integrated Shipping Information System) allows Member States to submit and update this information using an authorized IMO account. The guidance explains how to update SAR data in GISIS and access it for operational use.

9. Revised Procedures for DSC Distress Alerts

The Sub-Committee approved updates to the procedures for responding to DSC Distress alerts will ensure faster and more consistent SAR responses, which is critical for recreational vessels in distress.

10. Clarification on SAR for Uncrewed Craft

NCSR 12 confirmed that SAR services are not required to search for unmanned craft (e.g., drones or autonomous vessels). This clarification will help in prioritising resources for human life-saving efforts, which is especially relevant in busy recreational zones.

11. Other Important Technical Decisions

Digital Navigation Publications - Clear guidance was adopted for using official electronic documents and charts on board.

Software Maintenance Rules - New rules were agreed on how ships should update and maintain navigation and communication software—especially for cybersecurity purposes.

Modern ECDIS Chart Systems - Work is continuing on preparing ships for a new generation of digital sea charts, using the “S-100” standard .

LRIT Tracking System Review - Officials reviewed how well the global ship-tracking system is working, and suggested improvements.

Use of Support GPS Systems - It was clarified that systems that boost GPS accuracy (like SBAS or DGNSS) are *optional* for vessels, not required.

Radio Communication for the Future - Preparations have begun in ensuring that maritime radio frequencies will remain protected during proceedings at the major World Radiocommunication Conference in 2027.